



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



FRONT.



BACK.

ANCIENT IRISH INSCRIBED ARCH OF SHRINE, FOUND NEAR BALLYMENA.



PROJECTION OF UPPER SURFACE OF ANCIENT IRISH ARCH OF SHRINE, TO SHOW INSCRIPTION.

## ON AN ANCIENT INSCRIBED SHRINE-ARCH.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM REEVES, D. D.

THE very curious antiquarian fragment which forms the subject of the accompanying plates was the summit of an Irish shrine, most probably of one enclosing, or fastened down upon, an ancient ecclesiastical bell. In form it is an arch, from the upper convex surface of which rises a crest of uniform height, and which follows the whole curve. The substance of the article is bronze, and cast in one piece, except so far as the superficial ornamentation of gold, silver, and composition, which overlaid it.

The front of the arch is divided into three segmental panels, having inlaid plates of gold foil—the middle of interlaced, and the end ones of longitudinal patterns. The margins are of silver in relief, of a corded ridge carried round at the ends in alternating knots, and at the two middle stages crossing in like manner.

The ornamentation on the back is less elaborate, consisting of three parallel curved lines of ribbon pattern slightly in relief, in four compartments, interrupted by single check exchanges of the outside and middle lines. The thin silver strips which form this ornament are laid down on the bronze substance.

The crest is of open work of regular but nondescript design, formed in the casting. The rim is thick, and was ornamented by zigzag work of white, formed of delicate silver wire bent to the pattern, and then embedded in a green enamel paste, which became quite hard and retained it in its place, while it encased the bead of the rim. In the middle of the crest is an acorn-shaped tubercle, also formed in the casting, and hollow underneath, presenting in front a human head with large curved moustache, and square beard on chin, a good deal corroded at the forehead, nose, and mouth. The back is of uncertain design, and somewhat resembles a headless body in a sitting posture.

The upper surface of the arch is divided into two fields by the crest. The front portion was ornamented by some

interrupted pattern in green lacker, now scarcely distinguishable ; on the posterior portion runs the inscription which invests this article with so much interest, and of which anon.

The ends of the arch rest on flat expansions of the plate, on either side of each of which is a hole for the rivet which fastened the arch on the body of the reliquary which it surmounted.

The dimensions are:—

Total breadth (including crest),  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Breadth (without crest), 3 inches.

Total height of arch, 2 inches.

Height of arch in the clear,  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch.

Thickness in middle,  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch.

Thickness near ends,  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch.

Height of crest,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch.

The inscription, which, agreeably to the general rule, is on the *back*, and in the *silver* department, is a very remarkable feature, being in relief, in a very unusual situation, and, what is without a known parallel, formed in the casting. It begins at one end of the arch, and runs on, except where interrupted by the tubercle, to the other end. Some of the letters are rather obscure, and part of one word is to me still uncertain ; but, with the exception of it, the rest has been read with certainty. The inscription, interrupted in the middle by the human head, runs thus :—

op̄oomaelbr̄iḡdelar̄ino [head] ep̄naōγ̄ōd̄or̄iep̄ḡsōor̄iḡne  
which, subdivided into words, with the contractions resolved, is—

Op̄oit̄ ōo maelbr̄iḡoe lar̄ i n-dep̄naō ocup̄ oon̄ pi [. . .]  
ōo pīgne.

“A prayer for Maelbrigde through whom [it] was made, and for the king of . . . who made it.”

Op̄oit̄, an ecclesiastical loan word from the Latin *oratio*. ōo, the preposition “for.” Maelbr̄iḡoe, an ecclesiastical name of very frequent occurrence, signifying “servant of Brigid.” Lar̄, now lēr, “through.” l̄, now α, “whom.” n-dep̄naō, “was made,” past tense, subjunct. passive of the verb dean̄am, “I make.” Ocup̄, “and.” Oon̄, contracted

from *ooan*, "for the." *R*<sub>1</sub> (if the reading be right), "king." The next word may denote the lordship, but I am unable to explain it.

*Oo pigne*, "made," the past tense indicative active of *oeanam*, "I make."

I may add that this inscription is worded agreeably to the formula which prevails, *mutatis mutandis*, on most of our inscribed reliquaries, and for examples of which the reader may be referred to O'Donovan's "Irish Grammar," pp. 228, 233, 234 ; Petrie's "Ecclesiastical Architecture," pp. 270, 283, 311 ; Reeves's "Ecclesiastical Antiquities," p. 370 ; Reeves's "Adamnan's Vit. S. Columbæ," pp. 319, 327 ; Todd's "Stowe Missal," in Transactions Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxiii. Antiquities, pp. 9-15.

Unfortunately, in the present instance, the name Maelbríge, which, as the principal one, is most likely to be on record, is of very common occurrence, and affords little or no help towards ascertaining the date or place of the article ; while the name of the artificer, if perfectly legible, would, as is usual in such cases, be not of sufficient importance to be noticed in the Annals. Or, if the second member of the inscription commemorates a secular chieftain, as the first probably does an ecclesiastical superior, his name is not given, and his principality is uncertain. Thus we are left to the style of the work and of the letter to form our conjectures as to what is always in antiquities the first thought, the age of the article. The history of the find is likewise unsatisfactory in the extreme, and does little more than fix the home of the relique to the north-east of Ulster. I am informed by Mr. Robert Day, Jun., the owner, that he obtained it in the town of Ballymena, from a dealer, who stated that it was found, together with a golden bulla (partly broken), on the Bann shore. From the circumstance that the article was disposed of at Ballymena, we may reasonably suppose that the Lower Bann was the portion of this long river beside which it was found, and thus guess-work has its field amongst the old churches of the counties of Antrim and Londonderry, which, at a moderate distance, line this river on either side,

as, on the east, Duneane, Ahoghill, and Coleraine ; and, on the west, Church Island, Aghadowey, and Camus.

Among the twenty-two examples of the name Maelbrighde in O'Donovan's Index to the Four Masters there is only one to which the subject of the present inscription can be locally referred ; namely, Maelbrighde, son of Redan, successor of Mac Nisse and Colman Ela, that is, bishop of Connor, and abbot of the churches of Muckamore and Ahoghill, who died in the year 954. But that date is too early for the styles of ornament and letter which characterize this article, and seem rather to indicate two centuries later.

---

#### UNPUBLISHED GERALDINE DOCUMENTS.

EDITED BY THE REV. SAMUEL HAYMAN, B. A.

##### NO. I.—RUSSELL'S "RELATION OF THE FITZGERALDS OF IRELAND."

AMONG the *desiderata* of literature, histories of our great Houses may be specified. Goodly tomes, devoted to this species of research, appear from time to time in the chief cities of Continental Europe ; and our transatlantic brethren, of late years, have exhibited their characteristic energy in supplying us with genealogical publications of no common merit. Nationally, we are lagging behind. Should we desire the story of some old race, we may open a "Peerage," or a "Landed Gentry," and find—what the industrious compilers only professed to offer—dim tracings of the Family's annals and achievements. But these shadowy outlines fail to supply our curiosity. We ask for more than an array of names and dates. We require, not the dry anatomy, but the living restoration of the Departed. We sigh for what remains to be done, yet what cannot be accomplished, until the sealed muniment-chest give up its treasures, and the silent record-chamber admit the laborious student into an exploration of its mystic recesses.

To most rules exceptions may be found. The piety of a few individuals has done much towards rolling away our reproach about Family Histories. Good and gifted men